



SCHOOL ENTRY AGE

200 W. Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools

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At what age are children required to start school?

Effective July 1 2002, the age of eligibility for enrolling prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students changed. The State Board of Education has adopted September 1 as the cut-off date for the age of entrance to school according to the plan outlined in COMAR 13A.08.02 Age for School Attendance for phasing in the new date at the rate of one month per year as follows:

Prekindergarten: Beginning with the 2002-03 school year through the 2005-06 school year, a child admitted to the prekindergarten program in the public schools shall be 4 years old or older on:

- October 31, 2003, if the child applies for entrance for the 2003-04 school year, or
- September 30, 2004, if the child applies for entrance for the 2004-05 school year.

Beginning with the 2005-06 school year and each school year thereafter, a child admitted to the prekindergarten program in the public schools shall be 4 years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance.

Kindergarten: Beginning with the 2003-04 school year through the 2006-07 school year, a child admitted to the kindergarten program in the public schools shall be 5 years old or older on:

- November 30, 2003, if the child applies for entrance for the 2003-04 school year,
- October 31, 2004, if the child applies for entrance for the 2004-05 school year or
- September 30, 2005, if the child applies for entrance for the 2005-06 school year.

Beginning with the 2006-07 school year and each school year thereafter, a child admitted to the kindergarten program in the public schools shall be 5 years old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance.

First Grade: Beginning with the 2004-05 school year through the 2007-08 school year, a child admitted to the first grade in the public schools shall be at least 6 years old on or before:

- November 30, 2004, if the child applies for entrance for the 2004-05 school year,
- October 31, 2005, if the child applies for entrance for the 2005-06 school year or
- September 30, 2006, if the child applies for entrance for the 2006-07 school year.

Beginning with the 2007-08 school year and each school year thereafter, children admitted to first grade shall be at least 6 years old on or before September 1 of the school year in which they apply for entrance. The local board of education may adopt a regulation permitting a 5-year-old child, upon request of the parent/guardian, to be admitted to first grade if the local superintendent or superintendent's designee determines that the child has demonstrated capabilities warranting early admission.

Is enrollment in kindergarten mandatory?

Yes. Every age-eligible child must be enrolled in kindergarten in either a public school or a nonpublic school approved by MSDE, or enrolled in a licensed child care or family child care program before enrolling in first grade.

Can entrance to kindergarten be delayed?

Yes. State Board of Education regulations allow parents or legal guardians to submit a one-year level of maturity waiver for a kindergarten-age child if they believe that a delay in kindergarten attendance is in the best interest of the child. The child, however, must attend kindergarten the next year. For more information, see Maryland State Department of Education Fact Sheet 49, Level of Maturity Waivers.

May children begin prekindergarten, kindergarten or first grade early?

According to COMAR 13A.08.02 Age for School Attendance, local school systems may adopt a regulation allowing for the early entrance of a student to prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade:

√ *Prekindergarten:* The local board of education may adopt a policy permitting a 3-year-old child, upon request by the parent or guardian, to be admitted to prekindergarten if the local superintendent of schools or the superintendent's designee determines that the child has demonstrated capabilities warranting early admission.

√ *Kindergarten:* The local board of education may adopt a policy permitting a 4-year-old child, upon request by the parent or guardian, to be admitted to kindergarten if the local superintendent of schools or the superintendent's designee determines that the child has demonstrated capabilities warranting early admission.

√ *First Grade:* The local board of education may adopt a policy permitting a 5-year-old child, upon request by the parent or guardian, to be admitted to the first grade if the local superintendent of schools or the superintendent's designee determines that the child has demonstrated capabilities warranting early admission.

What happens if children are overwhelmed by kindergarten?

Since kindergarten is the first school experience for most children, there will always be children, regardless of their age, who have difficulty adjusting to the school routine. In this case, close communication between the child's family and the child's teacher is crucial for supporting the developmental growth of the child. Under certain circumstances, the teacher may provide or arrange for specific intervention services to address the child's needs immediately and effectively.

How can I learn more?

To learn more about your child's entrance into school, contact the Early Learning Office at MSDE at 410-767-0335 or write to the Maryland State Department of Education, Early Learning Office, 200 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.